REC'D FEB 11 1957

critical digest

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This Week

Plans for the spring NYC City Center spring drama season were dropped. The program of three plays, each to run two weeks, was to have followed the current ballet season. Jean Dalrymple will instead plan the City Center light opera season which will start March 13. Revivals being considered include The Beggar's Opera, The Pajama Game, Brigadoon and South Pacfic.

Plays

Candide closed as scheduled, but producers may re-open it in a week or so... Eugenia Saturday matinee cancelled due to Tallulah Bankhead's illness... Waiting for Godot closed Jan 26... The Potting Shed, orginally slated for 4 weeks, has tickets on sale to Apr. 20... Hotel Paradiso, a French farce starring Bert Lahr, to open in April at Miller... Two modern French plays to be presented this season--Patate, a newly opened French hit, to be presented by Gilbert Miller; Brouhaha to be presented by Robert Joseph.

Players

Edward Mulhare started first 4 week stint replacing Rex Harrison in My Fair Lady (reviews-see page 2). Later in year he will replace Harrison for an 8 week period, and will assume the role regularly in Dec 1957... Anna Magnani due in NY this month to discuss possible Broadway revue to be produced by Fryer & Carr... Errol Flynn and Huntington Hartford have formed partnership to present Jane Eyre in London and NY. They will also present Richelieu in NY, Flynn starring and directing.

Calender

A House Remembered-Actors Play-House-100 7th Av S. -2/6. S. Beryl Lush presents new drama by Louis A Lippa... A Visit to a Small Planet -Booth -2/7. Cyril Ritchard stars in and directs Gore Vidal new comedy presented by Clinton Wilder & George Axelrod... Jerry Lewis-Palace 2/7. All -Star Variety Show headed by Lewis ... Le Misanthrope- Winter Garden- 2/7. 3rd bill in Renaud-Barrault repertory... There Is No End -Covenant-52 E 78- 2/8- New drama by Anthony Palma, produced & directed by author.

Equity & Unions

Equity Council is considering easing Alien actor restrictions. League of NY Theatres and Equity have been discussing the problem for the past week... 14 entertainment unions sent a special delegation to Albany, NY, to ask for revision of State Unemployment Insurance Law that would relieve serious hardship among theatre workers. Group asked for cut to 15 weeks minimum employment yearly instead of 20 weeks before receiving benefits.

Summer Playhouses

New musical tent planned for Rye, NY, near Playland Park, Philip Moloney producer. 13 week season of Westchester Musical Theatre to open June 15 with Bob Roberts director.

Other Broadways

Norman Barrs, who subbed for Maurice Evans in final week of Apple Cart NY run, will sub for him on road tour until Evans recovers from bronchtitis attack... Edwin Lester to producer Rodger & Hammerstein shows in Los Angeles and San Francisco yearly for next five years.

Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

Edward Mulhare in My Fair Lady- Hellinger-2/4. 4 pro reviews for Edward Mulhare, Rex Harrison's replacement for a month in the hit show--Times, Herald Tribune, Post and World-Telegram & Sun. His interpretation of the single-tracked Higgins is sound, dynamic and nicely paced, summed up Funke, Times. Mulhare's voice is on a par with Harrison's, Times man noted. Proved himself capable of taking the baton without fumbling, added Beckley, Herald Tribune. Though he portrayed his nervousness once, felt Peper, World-Telegram & Sun, he was otherwise excellent. The young Irishman proved to be an actor of charm, humor, dexterity, authority, with an attractive sense of character and an ability to speak a line or put over a lyric clearly and engagingly, added Watts, Post. Critic also noted that show itself remains every bit as delightful as opening night. Not only captures the Shavian spirit superbly but comes close to being that perfect musical comedy, he concluded.

The Potting Shed- Bijou- 1/29. 7 pro votes, with varying degrees of warmth greeted the first production of Carmen Capalbo and Stanley Chase. Graham Greene's play starring Sybil Thorndike and Robert Flemyng, directed by Capalbo is first in series of presentations, O'Neill's Moon for the Misbegotten being next on list. Atkinson, Times, thought play a bit slow in getting started, but once in hand it is an original drama that probes deep into the spirit and casts a spell. Kerr, Herald Tribune, admitted it was a complicated play, but a very good one in its restless defiant, edgy way. Chapman, News, billed it as an intellectually provocative play with an excellent company. Coleman, Mirror, filed a mild pro view, feeling that as a playwright Greene is stiff, prone to substitute argument for emotion. But like all his colleagues he praised entire cast. Watts, Post, thought the performances were nothing less than masterly, making play a distinguished event in our theatre season. McClain, Journal American, enjoyed proceedings for two full acts, but feared the third act lagged badly. Donnelley, WT &S, found that play at several points went off the rails, but otherwise thought it brilliantly wrought entertainment, fascinating from first to last.

Eugenia-Ambassador- 1/30. 7 con votes on play, with only Atkinson, Times, okaying star Tallulah Bankhead. John C Wilson production of Randolph Carter's dramatization of Henry James "The Europeans" was savagely attacked as one of the worst plays of the season by all the critics. Dated, stilted, dull, boring were a few of the chosen words. McHarry, News, praised Miles White's costumes, while McClain, Journal American, thought the devoted Bankhead follower may enjoy it. In script star has flatly, finally and irrevocably met an immovable object, concluded Kerr, Herald Tribune. An empty little number hacked out with a dull chisel, commented Coleman, Mirror. In addition to the above, Watts, Post, also found it difficult to hear what star was saying.

Christophe Colomb-Winter Garden 1/30. First bill of Renaud-Barrault repertory company highly praised by critics. Paul Claudel's spectacular version of the explorer's life with producers in leading roles, in production presented in NY by S. Hurok, was billed as a piece of theatrical magic by Matthews, Times. Superb acting and splendid scenic effects shared applause. A rewarding spectacle, stated McCord, Herald Tribune Herridge, Post, noted that book is not very substantial, but imaginative staging by Barrault gives it life, color and interest. Donnelley, WT&S, agreed with colleagues that knowledge of French was not necessary to enjoy spectacle and style of French visitors. This is first of six plays which will be presented during the NY run.

One woman-Hamlet-De Lys 1/28. 2 cons- Times, Post - and 1 pro- WT&S, were recorded by Siobhan McKenna's one woman Hamletproduction staged by Henry Hewes for 3 performances for NY Chapter of ANTA. With the rest of the cast off-stage Miss McKenna gave an edited version of Hamlet's speeches Atkinson, Times, panned it as neither a performance nor a recital. Herridge, Post, warned that it was a precedent that did not bear repeating. Donnelley WT&S, enjoyed it, but was darned if he knew why/.

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" PROS & CONS BY TMK "

The Potting Shed is a fascinating blend of edge-of-the-seat mystery plan with built-in religious discussion. Remarkable acting and direction of a very difficult play. All elements add up to a fine start for the ambitious Bijou program. Producers also deserve credit for turning out an interesting independent playbill.

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Eugenia is a newly minted antique 1890 play that even Tallulah Bankhead couldn't save. It presents some of the dullest on-stage tea parties in the history of the theatre.

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The Hidden River is an exciting melodrama on the French underground, its morals and its aftermath. Though not as deep nor as important as the recent The River Line the dramatization of the Storm Jamison novel makes for interesting theatre every moment. Acting is uniformly perfect.

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In Good King Charles Golden Days seems more like a witty, illustrated preface to a Shaw play than a drama itself. The idea is intriguing to have 3 famous English gents meet to discuss religion, politics, math, etc. But even a devoted GBS fan must admit the evening is on the long side.

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Forthcoming TV production of "The Animal Kingdom" should have several surprises as script is laundered for TV codes.

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Loss of spring drama season at City Center is a loss indeed to the thousands of theatre patrons whose budgets can only afford legit at the City Center price scale. The fans of the drama and musical comedy programs at the City Center have been loyal and have made this department one of the few profitable at the Center. Better long-range planning is called for to insure that such a loss of a season does not ever occur again.

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The do-it-yourself vogue has finally reached the Off Broadway producer. With the rapid growth of the little theatre movement in NYC it was only a matter of time until the producers built, or adapted, their own theatres. Current prize goes to Lily Turner who is turning a former church into two houses. Where this could lead to, no one can be certain. But theatre folks with large living rooms should start to be choosey in selecting guests or they may find themselves theatre landlords.

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Canada's proposed $50 millions art fund plan bears watching. US plans for possible federal subsidy have never got past talking stage because no solid, sensible plan was ever developed and/or agreed to.

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Now that Edward Mulhare is safely installed in My Fair Lady, let someone lay a minor portion of blame on the simple fact that Rex Harrison's contract with the management invited such a confusing situation.

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London Theatre

Plays

The Iron Duchess by William Douglas Home March 14 at Cambridge, replacing his The Reluctant Debutante. Athene Seyler and Ronald Squire are featured in cast directed by Jack Minster, E. P. Clift producer...Salad Days reached 1000th performance at Vaudeville, French production opened last month in Paris.

Players

Gilbert Vernon invited to Mexico City to present a Spanish version of Cranks ...Edwige Feulliere and her French company due at Palace March 4 for 4 week season is presented by French government, tour will include US and Canada...Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh tour in Titus Andronicus opens May 15 in Paris.

Club Theatres

Two David Garrick plays-The Guardian and The Lying Valet open Feb 6 at Hovenden Theatre Club.

London Theatre TV

A Guest in the House presented on Granada-TV Jan 31 starring Hector Ross.

British Books

"Emlyn Williams", biography by Richard Findlater published by Rockliff ..."Nights of Gladness" by W. Macqueen Pope(his 15th book on theatre) published by Foyle is a history of the English musical play.

For Stage Struck Only

*This weekly NYC newsletter digests----Complete theatre news(page 1), reviews of all openings(page 2), comments by critics(page 6.)

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